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**flat, a., adv., and n.**<sup>3</sup>

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(flæt) Forms: 5-7 **flatte**, (9 *dial.*) **flatt**, 4- **flat**. [a. ON. *flatr* (Sw. *flat*, Da. *flad*) = OHG. *flaz*: —OTeut. *\*flato-*. Cf. **FLET**.

No certain cognates are known; connexion with OAryan *\*plat-*, *plath-* (Gr. *πλατύς*, Skr. *prthú*, broad) is plausible with regard to the sense (cf. F. *plat* flat, believed to be ultimately from *πλατύς*), but the representation of OAryan *t* or *th* by Teut. *t* (exc. when reduced from *tt* after a long vowel) is anomalous. The synonymous Ger. *flach* is unconnected.]

**A. adj.** I. Literal senses.

**1. a.** Horizontally level; without inclination. Of a seam of coal: Lying in its original plane of deposition; not tilted.

**c1400** *Destr. Troy* 7326 He felle to þe flat erthe. **c1440** *Prom. Parv.* 164/1 Flatt, *bassus vel planus*. **1605** SHAKES. *Lear* III. ii. 7 Thou all-shaking Thunder, Strike flat the thicke Rotundity o' th' world. **1634** SIR T. HERBERT *Trav.* 35 Houses..flat a-top. **1634** MILTON *Comus* 375 Though sun and moon Were in the flat sea sunk. **1669** STURMY *Mariner's Mag.* VII. v. 6 As the common flat Mariners Compass doth divide the Horizon. **1805** FORSYTH *Beauties Scotl.* I. 268 The strata near the Esk are termed flat seams of coal. **1842-76** GWILT *Archit.* §1903g, In India..all buildings of any importance have flat roofs. **1860** TYNDALL *Glac.* I. ix. 62, I reached the flat summit of the rock. **1879** G. C. HARLAN *Eyesight* ix. 133 A flat desk promotes a stooping position.

**b. Arch. flat arch** (see quotes.).

**1715** LEONI *Palladio's Archit.* I. xxiv, Arches..flat (those are call'd so, which are but a Section of a Circle). *Ibid.* I. xxv, Certain Arches are turn'd over the Cornices of Doors and Windows, which Workmen call Flat-Arches, to prevent the Doors and Windows from being press'd with too much weight. **1762** H. WALPOLE *Vertue's Anecd. Paint.* (1765) I. v. 114 This Saxon style begins to be defined by flat and round arches. **1872** SHIPLEY *Gloss. Eccles. Terms, Flat arch*. An arch in which the sides of the voussoirs are cut so as to support each other, but their ends form a straight line top and bottom.

**2.** Spread out, stretched or lying at full length (*esp.* on the ground); *rare*, exc. in predicative use (often quasi-advb.) with *fall*, *fling*, *lay*, *lie*, etc. **a.** Chiefly of a person: Prostrate; with the body at full length. †Also in phr. *a flat fall*.

**c1320** *Sir Beues* 1040 A felde him flat to grounde. **1399** LANGL. *Rich. Redeles* II. 183 [The birds] ffell with her ffetheris fflat vppon þe erthe..and mercy be-souzte. **c1440** *Jacob's Well* 23 Sche..flatt on þe ground cryed: 'god..haue mercy on me!' **c1450** HOLLAND *Howlat* 838 The folk..Flang him flat in the fyre. **1535** COVERDALE *Isa.* xlix. 23 They shal fall before the with their faces flat vpon the earth. **1610**

SHAKES. *Temp.* II. ii. 16, I'll fall flat, Perchance he will not minde me. **1621** LADY M. WROTH *Urania* 138 None parting from him without flat falles, or apparant losse of honour. **1657** J. SMITH *Myst. Rhet.* 56 Thus a great wound is called a scratch; a flat fall, a foile. **1719** DE FOE *Crusoe* (1840) II. xiv. 293 He laid me flat on the ground. **1726** *Adv. Capt. R. Boyle* 290, I order'd every Man..to lye flat upon their Bellies till we had received the Fire of the Enemy. **1856** KANE *Arct. Expl.* I. xxx. 411 The hunter is flat and motionless. **1860-1** F. NIGHTINGALE *Nursing* 33, I have seen a patient fall flat on the ground who was standing when his nurse came into the room. **1891** R. KIPLING *Plain Tales from Hills* 186 That night a big wind blew..the tents flat.

**b. Of a building or city: Level with the ground; also, levelled, overthrown.**

**1560** BIBLE (Genev.) *Josh.* vi. 20 The wall fell downe flat. **1607** SHAKES. *Cor.* III. i. 204 This is the way to lay the Citie flat. **1666** SOUTH *Serm. Consecr. Bp. Rochester* Serm. (1737) I. v. 166 That Christ-Church stands so high above ground, and that the church of Westminster lies not flat upon it, is [etc.]. **1671** MILTON *P.R.* IV. 363 What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat.

*fig.* **1611** SHAKES. *Cymb.* I. iv. 23 To fortifie her iudgement, which else an easie battery might lay flat.

**c. Of things usually more or less erect or elevated.**

**1671** MILTON *P.R.* II. 223 Cease to admire, and all her Plumes Fall flat.

*fig.* **1671** MILTON *Samson* 596, I feel..My hopes all flat. **1684** T. HOCKIN *God's Decrees* 333 To raise our expectations of happiness high, and then to have them fall flat and low.

**†d. Of a plant: Creeping, trailing on the ground.**

**1578** LYTE *Dodoens* I. lxxxvi. 127 *Verbenaca supina*..in English Base or flat Veruayne.

**e. Lying in close apposition; with its whole length or surface in contact irrespectively of position.** *Naut.* Of a sail: **flat aback** or **aft** (see quot. 1815): said also of the vessel.

**1559** W. CUNNINGHAM *Cosmogr. Glasse* 86 Placing my Instrument flat on th' earth. **1581** J. MAPLET *Diall Destinie* 66 In theyr coursing they [Hares] apply their eares fast and flat to their backes. **1684** R. H. *School Recreat.* 138 Spreading your Net on the Ground smooth and flat. **1715** DESAGULIERS *Fires Impr.* 131 When it is open, it may be flat to the Chimney. **1769** FALCONER *Dict. Marine* (1789) s.v. *Aback*, Lay all flat Aback. **1796** WITHERING *Brit. Plants* IV. 76 Saucers dark green, lying flat on the leaves. **1815** *Falconer's Dict. Marine* (ed. Burney), *Flat aft* is the situation of the sails when their surfaces are pressed aft against the mast by the force of the wind. **1840** R. H. DANA *Bef. Mast* vi, We

found the vessel hove flat aback. **1885** H. J. STONOR in *Law Times* LXXX. 119/1 The ladder was standing flat against the side wall.

**f. Paper-making.** Packed without folding.

**1890** JACOBI *Printing* xxxi. 249 A ream may be either 'flat', 'folded', or 'lapped'.

**g. Of the hand:** Extended, not clenched.

**1847** TENNYSON *Princ.* II. 345 The child Push'd her flat hand against his face and laugh'd. **1859** — *Enid* 1565 The brute Earl..unknightly, with flat hand, However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

**h. Of relatively small curvature or inclination. spec.** Of a golf-club: having the head at a very obtuse angle to the shaft; of a swing of the club: not upright, oblique.

**1857** H. B. FARNIE *Golfer's Man.* (1947) v. 27 Regarding the lie of a club for effecting distance, whether it should be flat or upright, little can be said..the rule being, the longer the club, the flatter the lie. **1887** Jamieson's *Scot. Dict. Suppl.*, *Flat*, adj. A term in golfing, applied to a club of which the head is at a very obtuse angle to the shaft. **1888** Lockwood's *Dict. Mech. Engin.*, *Flat sweep*, a flat sweep or curve signifies one that is relatively of less curvature than others with which it may be compared. **1909** P. A. VAILE *Mod. Golf* i. 17 [One who plays an upright swing] will keep longer in the line of the ball's flight to the hole, and in the plane of its flight, than one who stands away from the ball and uses a flat swing. *Ibid.* iii. 32 A club with a lie which is too flat.

**3. Without curvature or projection of surface.** **a. Of land, the face of the country:** Plain, level; not hilly or undulating.

c1440 [see 1]. **1553** BRENDE *Q. Curtius* IV. 49, A Nacion..inhabiting vpon a flat shore. **1610** SHAKES. *Temp.* IV. i. 63 Thy..flat Medes thetchd with Stouer, them [Sheepe] to keepe. **1673** TEMPLE *Observ. United Prov.* Wks. 1731 I. 44 The whole Province of Holland is generally flat. **1748** *Relat. Earthq. Lima* 2 This Town was built on a low flat Point of Land. **1838** Murray's *Hand-bk. N. Germ.* 71 High dykes..protect the flat country from inundations. **1859** JEPHSON *Brittany* xii. 202 The country became more and more flat.

**b. Of a surface:** Without curvature, indentation, or protuberance; plane, level.

**1551** T. WILSON *Logike* (1580) 37 When thei se the ground beaten flat round about. **1559** CUNNINGHAM *Cosmogr. Glasse* 47 As touchyng your opinion, that th' Earth is flat, I will prove it to be rounde. **1585** T. WASHINGTON tr. *Nicholay's Voy.* IV. xxxvi. 159b, Not any carved images of saints..but on flat pictures painted. **1632** LITHGOW *Trav.* VI. 262 The flat face of the Rocke. **1703** MOXON *Mech. Exerc.* 268 That makes the Moulding flatter, this more circular. **1812-6** J. SMITH *Panorama Sc. & Art* I. 32 To grind one surface perfectly flat, it is..necessary to grind three at the same time. **1824** R. STUART *Hist. Steam Engine* 179 The flat face to which the blocks are ground. **1882** *Syd. Soc. Lex.*, *Chest, flat.* A

chest which has lost its rounded front.

**c. Of the face or nose.**

**c1400** *Ywaine & Gaw.* 259 His face was ful brade & flat. **1560** BIBLE (Genev.) *Lev.* xxi. 18 A man..that bath a flat nose. **1607** SHAKES. *Timon* IV. iii. 158 Downe with the Nose, Downe with it flat, take the Bridge quite away. **1697** W. DAMPIER *Voy.* I. 325 Their Faces are oval, their Foreheads flat. **1829** LYTTON *Devereux* II. iii. A very flat, ill-favoured countenance. **1836** W. IRVING *Astoria* II. 281 Their noses are broad and flat at top.

**†d. flat numbers:** those corresponding to plane surfaces, i.e. numbers composed of two factors.

**1557** RECORDE *Whetst.* Ciiij, Superficiall numbers, or Flatte numbers.

**e. flat side** (e.g. of a sword): opposed to the *edge*. Also *to turn (a sword) flat*.

**a1440** *Sir Eglam.* 1240 Syr Egyllamowre turnyd hys swerde flatt. **1727** W. SNELGRAVE *Guinea & Slave Trade* (1734) 236 Lifted up his broad Sword, and gave me a Blow on the Shoulder with the flat side of it. **1832** G. R. PORTER *Porcelain & Gl.* 226 The flat side..is to be turned towards the observer. **1835** LYTTON *Rienzi* I. iii, Touching the smith with the flat side of his sword.

**f. Having little projection from the adjacent surface. Rarely const. to.**

**1728** POPE *Dunc.* II. 43 With pert flat eyes she windowed well its head. **1865** CARLYLE *Fredk. Gt.* V. XIV. v. 201 It can now be discovered..by any eyes, however flat to the head.

**g. flat tyre** (U.S. *tire*): (a) a deflated or punctured tyre; also *ellipt.* as *flat*; (b) U.S. a dull and spiritless person. Also *flat wheel*.

**1923** WODEHOUSE *Inimitable Jeeves* xvi. 218 I'm bound to say it isn't very often I find my own existence getting a flat tyre. **1925** H. L. FOSTER *Trop. Tramp Tourists* xvi. 300 You think you're the berries, don't you? Well, you might have been once, but you're a flat-tire these days! You can't make the grade! **1927** *New Republic* 26 Jan. 277/2 He's a flat tire. **1929** 'C. WALT' *Love in Chicago* xv. 211 Stopping at the crossroads to see if I had a flat. **1934** J. M. CAIN *Postman always rings Twice* i. 12, I was in the filling station, fixing flats. **1942** 'N. SHUTE' *Pied Piper* 81 The driver wrestled to jack up the bus and get the flat wheel off.

**h. Of the frequency response of an amplifier or other electronic device: uniform (over a certain range of frequencies); of a device: having such a response; amplifying, attenuating, or reproducing equally signals of all frequencies.**

**1926** *Encycl. Brit.* XXVI. 281/2 A properly designed system is 'flat', i.e., indiscriminatory, over a sufficiently wide auditory band. **1949** FRAYNE & WOLFE *Elem. Sound Recording* xxix. 604 With this machine a frequency response flat within 2 db is obtained from 30 to 15,000 cycles. **1958** J. TALL *Techn. Magn. Recording* vi. 86 A flat amplifier is one that amplifies all frequencies equally. **1970** J. EARL *Tuners & Amplifiers* ii. 57 Trimmers across the bass and treble tone controls..make it possible to balance them for a 'flat' response when the controls are at the centre setting.

**4. transf.** **a. in Painting.** Without appearance of relief or projection. *flat tint*: one of uniform depth or shade.

**1755** JOHNSON, *Flat*, without relief, without prominence of the figures. **1821** CRAIG *Lect. Drawing* ii. 95 Throwing every mass of shadow into a flat tint. *Ibid.* iii. 153 The pictures..were in their general appearance, flat, insipid, and uninteresting. **1859** GULLICK & TIMBS *Paint*. 18 The impossibility of spreading a flat tint on the vellum. **1879** Cassell's *Techn. Educ.* III. 186 Pictures..flat, and deficient in light and shade, or brilliance.

**b. Engraving.** Wanting in sharpness; applied to a pull or impression of a plate which has received only the flat impression of the press without the overlay used to develop light and shade.

**1888** C. T. JACOBI *Printers' Voc.* 44 *Flat*, an expression used to indicate excessive flatness in an illustration owing to want of light and shade in overlaying. **1888** Flat pull [see sense 15]. **1897** SINGER & STRANG *Etching* 175 A 'flat' proof of a block as it comes from the photo~engraver generally shows itself to be in need of some touching up.

**c. Of paint, lacquer, or varnish:** lustreless, dull. (Cf. *FLAT* a., etc. C. 12, *FLAT* v.<sup>2</sup> 8a, *FLATTED ppl.* a. 5.)

**1896** *N.E.D.* s.v. *flat* v.<sup>2</sup> 8a, To cover (a surface) with flat, i.e. lustreless, paint. **1935** H. R. SIMONDS *Finishing Metal Products* xxv. 263 There may be gloss or flat paint, or an intermediate semigloss frequently known as egg-shell paint. **1940** R. C. MARTIN *Lacquer & Synthetic Enamel Finishes* xii. 370 Clear or flat lacquers may then be used to a finish. **1951** H. W. CHATFIELD *Gloss. Terms Paint Trades* 115 Flat varnishes, lacquers, enamels, etc. **1953, 1958** [see *EGG-SHELL* c]. **1971** *Sci. Amer.* Sept. 224/3 Coat the inside of the box with flat black paint.

**d. Photogr.** Wanting in contrast.

**1901** G. E. BROWN *Finishing Negative* vii. 66 Increasing contrasts..gives a 'snap' to otherwise flat negatives which is often very welcome. **1923** *Kodak Mag.* Mar. 36 From the negative least developed we shall get a print flat and grey with little difference between high light and shadow. **1953** T. L. J. BENTLEY *Man. Miniat. Camera* (ed. 4) viii. 113 A negative may be so flat and deficient in printing density that straightforward printing will not yield an enlargement of acceptable quality.

**5. a.** With additional notion: Having a broad level surface and little thickness. Of a foot: Touching the ground with the whole surface; but little arched.

**c1430** *Two Cookery-bks.* 29 Serue hem in almost flatte. **1530** PALSGR. 312/2 Flatte as a thyng is that is brode. **1577-87** HARRISON *England* III. iii. (1878) III. 224 Of fishes..I find fīue sorts, the flat, [etc.]. **1597** GERARDE *Herbal* 58 Flat wheate is..bearded and bordered with very rough and sharpe ailes, wherein consisteth the difference. **1613-39** I. JONES in Leoni *Palladio's Archit.* (1742) II. 44 Those great Pilasters in the Angle of the inside of the Temple are too flat. **1632** LITHGOW *Trav.* VI. 247 They weare on their heads flat round Caps. **1697** W. DAMPIER *Voy.* I. 49 The Booby is a Water-fowl..her Feet are flat like a Ducks Feet. **a1721** J. KEILL *Maupertuis' Diss.* (1734) 65 These conjectures concerning flat Stars..are rather the stronger. **1769** MRS. RAFFALD *Eng. Housekpr.* (1778) 303 To collar Flat Ribs of Beef. **1840** LARDNER *Geom.* 34 This ruler consists of a flat piece of wood with a straight edge. **1859-74** TENNYSON *Vivien* 348 May this hard earth cleave..and close again, and nip me flat, If I be such a traitress. **1888** Lockwood's *Dict. Mech. Eng., Flat File*..is either a tapered or a parallel file. **1882** QUAIN *Anat.* (ed. 9) I. 8 Tabular or flat bones, like the scapula, ilium, and the bones forming the roof and sides of the skull.

**†b.** Of false dice: Broad and thin. *Obs.*

**c1550** *Dice-Play* Ajb, A bale of flatte synke deuxis..A bale of flat cater trees. **1711** PUCKLE *Club* 30 Flats. *Note*, Dice flatter than they are long, to throw Trays and Quaters.

**c.** Of a blade, as opposed to 'three-edged'.

**d.** Phrases: *flat as a flawn, flounder, pancake* (see those ns.).

**e.** Of a vessel: Wide and shallow.

**1471** *Bury Wills* (Camden) 242, I peluem laton voc' a flat basyn. **1492** *Ibid.* 75 My flatte gylte cuppe. **1533** *Will of C. Bedford* in Weaver *Wells Wills* 27 John Bys the yonger a fflat cuppe of sylver. **1552** HULOET, Flatte bole for wine, *ecpatala*. **1611** BIBLE *Lev.* ii. 5 A meate offering baken in a panne [*marg.* on a flat plate].

## II. Senses of figurative origin.

**6. a.** Unrelieved by conditions or qualifications; absolute, downright, unqualified, plain; peremptory. Now chiefly of a denial, contradiction, etc., and in Shaksperian phrases, *flat blasphemy, burglary*.

**1551** T. WILSON *Logike* (1567) 61a, The aunswerer must still vse flatte denyng. **1577** J. NORTHBROOKE *Dicing* (1843) 121 Whosoeuer taketh and keepeth the mony of another..sheweth himself a flat theefe. **1586** B. YOUNG *Guazzo's Civ. Conv.* IV. 183 If I would tel you a flat lie, I wold say no. **1592** GREENE *Upst. Courtier* in *Harl. Misc.* (Malh.) II. 248 Why, Sir, to be flat with you, you līue by

your legges. **1603** SHAKES. *Meas. for M.* II. ii. 131 That in the Captaine's but a chollericke word, Which in the souldier is flat blasphemie. **1611** BEAUM. & FL. *King & No King* IV. iii, This is my flat opinion, which I'll die in. **1614** BP. HALL *Recoll. Treat.* 864 Who knowes not, that S. Homer, and S. Virgil are flat for it? **1641** MILTON *Ch. Govt.* I. (1851) 23 His Son Constantius prov'd a flat Arian. **1685** BAXTER *Paraphr. N.T. 1 Cor.* vii. 12, 13, I bring you not this as a flat command of Christ, but as my best Advice. **1699** BENTLEY *Phal.* 304 A piece of flat Nonsense. **1713** SWIFT *Apollo outwitted* vii, She gave no flat denial. **1788** T. JEFFERSON *Writ.* (1859) II. 551 In flat contradiction to their Arret of December last. **1839** KEIGHTLEY *Hist. Eng.* I. 97 He claimed to be put in possession..but met with a flat refusal. **1871** MORLEY *Crit. Misc.* Ser. I. 163 A flat impostor. **1891** R. KIPLING *Plain Tales from Hills* 212 It's flat, flagrant disobedience!

**b.** In the conclusive expression, *that's flat* (a) formerly = that's the absolute, undeniable truth; (b) a defiant expression of one's final resolve or determination.

**1588** SHAKES. *L.L.L.* III. i. 102 The Boy hath seld him a bargaine, a Goose, that's flat **1596** — *I Hen. IV*, IV. ii. 43. **1665** *Surv. Aff. Netherl.* 120 Its the greatest Bogg of Europe..that's flat. **1716** ADDISON *Drummer* I. i, I'll give Madam warning, that's flat. **1852** SMEDLEY *L. Arundel* i. 15 'I won't, then, that's flat', exclaimed Rachel.

**c.** Of a calm: Complete, 'dead'.

**1651** HOWELL *Venice* 119 The wind..became..a flat calm. **1697** W. DAMPIER *Voy.* I. 415 It fell flat calm. **1880** A. BRASSEY *Sunshine & Storm* 34 Half an hour later it was a flat calm.

**d.** Impecunious, penniless. *U.S. slang.* (Cf. *flat broke* s.v. FLAT *adv.* 2.)

**1833** *Sk. & Eccentr. D. Crockett* (1834) 60 Retiring to bed, comfortably situated, he awoke next morning flat without a dollar. **1930** *Times Lit. Suppl.* 4 Sept. 698/2 Satisfying his desires freely when he can, starving when he is 'flat'.

**e.** *to leave* (a person) *flat*, to 'drop' suddenly and completely; to go away from.

**1902** G. V. HOBART *It's up to You* ii. 37 Then they both chuckled and left me flat. **1919** in *Saucy Stories* Aug. 83/2 She got up enough spunk to leave him flat on Broadway. Lost him in the crowd... Refused to see him when he showed up. **1930** WODEHOUSE *Very Good, Jeeves!* iii. 85 He buzzed off, leaving me flat. **1942** T. RATTIGAN *Flare Path* I. i. 121 You meant my Johnny's going to leave me flat the minute the war's over.

**7.** Wanting in points of attraction and interest; prosaic, dull, uninteresting, lifeless, monotonous, insipid. Sometimes with allusion to sense 10. **a.** of composition, discourse, a joke, etc. Also of a person with reference to his composition, conversation, etc.

**1573** G. HARVEY *Letter-bk.* (Camden) 20 Mi over flat and homeli kind of writing. **1656** BP. HALL

*Occas. Med.* (1851) 63 They have proved..poor and flat in all other subjects. **1662** PEPYS *Diary* 11 May, A dull, flat Presbiter preached. **1711** ADDISON *Spect.* No. 124 ¶2 We should complain of many flat Expressions. **1712** W. ROGERS *Voy.* Intro. 16 Such strange Stories, as make the Voyages of those who come after..to look flat and insipid. **1806-7** J. BERESFORD *Miseries Hum. Life* (1826) vii. xxx, The longest story of the flattest proser that ever droned. **1822** HAZLITT *Table-t.* Ser. II. x. (1869) 204 The flattest thing of yours they can find. **1861** M. PATTISON *Ess.* (1889) I. 31 A rather flat treatment of trite themes. **1866** G. MACDONALD *Ann. Q. Neighb.* xiii. (1878) 254 I am rather a flat teller of stories. **1889** County x. in *Cornhill Mag.* Mar., He is always appreciative of the flattest joke.

**b. of one's circumstances, surroundings, etc.**

**1602** SHAKES. *Ham.* I. ii. 133 How weary, stale, flat, and vnprofitable Seemes to me all the vses of this world. **1706** ATTERBURY *Funeral Serm.* 8 All Earthly Satisfactions must needs..grow flat and unsavory. **1798** COLERIDGE *Fears in Solitude* 67 How flat and wearisome they feel their trade. **1848** MRS. GASKELL *Mary Barton* xvii, It seems so flat to be left behind. **1884** QUEEN VICTORIA *More Leaves* 25 It seemed to strike me much less than when I first saw it, as all is flat now.

**c. to fall flat** (said of a composition, discourse, etc.): to prove unattractive, uninteresting, or ineffective; to fail in exciting applause or approval.

**1841** MACAULAY *W. Hastings* (1880) 654 The best written defence must have fallen flat. **1860** DICKENS *Lett.* (1880) II. 125 All my news falls flat. **1885** C. L. PIRKIS *Lady Lovelace* II. xxv. 80 The haranguing..fell as flat as the reasoning.

**8. Deficient in sense or mental vigour; stupid, dull, slow-witted.**

**1599** SHAKES. *Hen. V.* Prol. 9 Pardon, Gentles all: The flat vnrayed Spirits, that hath dar'd..to bring forth So great an Obiect. **1601** SIR J. OGLE *Parlie at Ostend* in Sir F. Vere *Comm.* 158 Nor do I believe that..any of you judge me so flat, or so stupid. **1680** BUTLER *Rem.* (1759) I. 132 No dull Idolater was ere so flat In Things of deep and solid Weight. **1878** SEELEY *Stein* I. 312, I look for nothing from empty, slow, flat people.

**9. a. Wanting in energy and spirit; lifeless, dull. Also, out of spirits, low, dejected, depressed.**

**1602** SHAKES. *Ham.* IV. vii. 31 You must not thinke That we are made of stuffe, so flat, and dull, That, [etc.]. **1642** DK. NEWCASTLE *Lett.* in *Life* (1886) 330 The town will not admit of me..so I am very flat and out of countenance here. **1680** BEVERIDGE *Serm.* (1729) I. 37 Lest he should grow flat in his devotions. **1801** *Med. Jnrl.* V. 324 Her spirits were dull and flat. **1805** LAMB *Lett.* (1888) I. 213, I am now calm, but sadly taken down and flat. **1844** ALB. SMITH *Adv. Mr. Ledbury* xxiii. (1886) 71 The audience..not witnessing any situation half so comic as the one they had just seen, were proportionately flat.



**b. Of trade, etc.: Depressed, dull, inactive.**

**1831** *Lincoln Herald* 30 Dec. 1 The trade for barley is exceedingly flat. **1894** *Times* (weekly ed.) 9 Feb. 123/2 Tallow trade, flat, but prices unchanged. **1894** *Daily News* 1 June 3/5 A flat market for maize.

**c. Of an electric battery: run down, (fully) discharged.**

**1951** *Autocar* 9 Nov. 1445/2 After five hundred miles of touring I found myself with a completely flat battery. **1961** *Which?* Apr. 89/1 If this discharging process goes on long enough, the battery will be left flat. **1969** N. FREELING *Tsing-Boum* ii. 17 The car battery is flat and I've got to charge it. **1978** B. FRANCIS *AA Car Duffer's Guide* 42/1 A bloke rings up saying he had a flat battery.

**10. Of drink, etc.: That has lost its flavour or sharpness; dead, insipid, stale.**

**1607** HEYWOOD *Woman kille* Epil., The wine..drunk too flat. **1626** BACON *Sylva* §367 Spirit of Wine burned..tasteth nothing so hot in the Mouth..but flat and dead. **1708** J. PHILIPS *Cyder* l. 49 Fruit..to the Tongue inelegant and flat. **1772** PRIESTLEY in *Phil. Trans.* LXII. 154 When..cyder is become flat or dead. **1861** GEO. ELIOT *Silas M.* 20 Tankards sending forth a scent of flat ale.

**11. a. Of sound, a resonant instrument, a voice: Not clear and sharp; dead, dull. Also in Combs., as *flat-sounding*, *-vowelled*.**

**1626** BACON *Sylva* §154 If..you stop the Holes of a Hawkes Bell, it will make no Ring, but a flat noise, or Rattle. **a1663** SANDERSON in *Treas. Dav.* Ps. cl. 5 The cymbal will be flat, it will have no life or spirit in it. **1718** PRIOR *Pleasure* 501 Too flat I thought this voice, and that too shrill. **1831** BREWSTER *Nat. Magic* ix. (1833) 217 The..variety of sounds..produced by the report of his fowling-piece. Sometimes they are flat and prolonged, at other times short and sharp. **1920** 'K. MANSFIELD' *Lett.* (1928) II. 3 His *flat-sounding* voice. **1936** 'M. FRANKLIN' *All that Swagger* i. 10 The haw-haw, flat-vowelled Public School English.

**b. Music. Of a note or singer: Relatively low in pitch; below the regular or true pitch. *B*, *D*, *E*, etc. *flat*: a semitone lower than B, D, E, etc. Of an interval or scale: = MINOR.**

**1591** SHAKES. *Two Gent.* l. ii. 93 Now you are too flat; And marre the concord, with too harsh a descant. **1597** MORLEY *Introd. Mus.* 3, b..signifying the halfe note and flatt singing. **1609** DOULAND *Ornith. Microl.* 15 To sing *fa* in a flat Scale. **1613** DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN *Poems* 144 Like Arions Harpe Now delicately flat, now sweetly sharp. **1674** PLAYFORD *Skill Mus.* II. 95 A flat Third lower, is C *fa* ut. **1678** PHILLIPS s.v. *Cliff*, The B-Cliff..being only to shew when Notes are to be sung flat. **1691** RAY *Creation* 204 Cartilages and Muscles to contract or dilate it [the windpipe] as we would have our Voice Flat or Sharp. **1773** BARRINGTON in *Phil. Trans.* LXIII. 270 The flat third is plaintive. **1874** HELPS *Soc. Press.* iii. 46 For the sixth time he hears C flat instead of C sharp played. **1875** OUSELEY *Harmony* v. 67 All the fifths in tuning keyed instruments, are tuned a little flatter than perfection.

**c. quasi-adv.**

*Mod.* She has a tendency to sing flat.

**12. Gram. †a. Of an accent, a syllable: Unstressed.**

**1589** PUTTENHAM *Eng. Poesie* II. xiii. (Arb.) 135 [Re] being the first syllable, passing obscurely away with a flat accent is short. **1612** BRINSLEY *Pos. Parts* (1669) 94 Every Noun Substantive Commune increasing flat or short in the Genitive case, is the Masculine Gender. What mean you by this, to increase flat? *A.* To have the last syllable but one pressed down flat in the pronouncing.

**b. Phonetics.** Of a consonant: Voiced, i.e. uttered with vibration of the vocal chords, e.g. *b, d, v*, etc., as opposed to breath, e.g. *p, t, f*, etc. Of a vowel: (see quot. 1934<sup>3</sup>). Also, of a sound: characterized by the downward shift of higher frequencies.

**1874** R. MORRIS *Hist. Eng. Gram.* §54 *B* and *d*, &c. are said to be soft or flat, while *p* and *t*, &c. are called hard or sharp consonants. **1901** H. SWEET in *Maître Phonétique* 145, if wij dis'tingwif bi'twijn 'mikst' pə'zifən ən 'flæt' feip əv ðə tən, wij sæd nætʃərəli kɔ:l ðə θrij njuw siəriz bæc-flæt bæc-mikst frant-mikst. **1934** H. C. WYLD in *S.P.E. Tract* XXXIX. 607 Another long vowel [ā] (low-flat-tense). *Ibid.* 608 This vowel..is the mid-flat-tense. *Ibid.* 609 The tongue may be so used that neither back nor front predominates, but the whole tongue, which lies evenly in the mouth, is raised or lowered. Vowels so formed are called 'mixed' by Sweet, but I owe to him also the term 'flat' which I prefer as more descriptive. The vowel [ā] in *bird* is low-flat. **1952** R. JAKOBSON et al. *Prelim. Speech Analysis* 31 Flat vs. Plain...Flattening manifests itself by a downward shift of a set of formants.

**c. Gram.** Not distinguished by a characteristic ending, as an adverb which has the same form as an adjective or substantive, or a substantive used as an adjective.

Flat adverbs of modern English often go back to an Old English form ending in *-e*.

**1871** J. EARLE *Philol. Eng. Tongue* 361 The Flat Adverb is simply a substantive or an adjective placed in an adverbial position. **1901** GREENOUGH & KITTREDGE *Words* (1902) 199 Not all of our 'flat adverbs' actually go back to such *-ē* forms. **1965** *English Studies* XLVI. 356 The 'flat-adverbs' (like e.g. *fast*).

**13. a. Stock-exchange (U.S.)** Stock is said to be borrowed *flat*, when the lender allows no interest on the money he takes as security for it (*Cent.* and *Standard Dicts.*).

**1841** *N.Y. Standard* Jan. (Th.), *Flat*, without interest, in brokers' slang. **1870** *Congress. Globe* 25 Jan. 733/2 [Certificates] have been sold 'flat'..that is to say, without taking the interest into account. **1870** J. K. MEDBERY *Men & Myst. Wall St.* 61 Stock can almost always be obtained by borrowers, either flat, i.e. with no interest on either side, or with interest at market rates for the money advanced. **1885**

*Harper's Mag.* Nov. 843/2 To lend 'flat' means without interest.

**b. Comm.** Unvarying, fixed, uniform; of a standard amount; not varying with changed conditions; without excess or diminution for particular cases. Also quasi-*adv.*

**1898** *Engineering Mag.* XVI. 38 Three costs are kept,—the flat cost (including labor and material only), the factory cost (factory expense added to flat cost), and total cost (including all expenses of every kind). **1902** *Encycl. Brit.* XXXII. 163/2 The statistics as to the street railway earnings in America are based upon the universal practice there of charging a 'flat' 5 cent fare for the whole trip. **1903** *Westm. Gaz.* 30 July 10/2 The Tube Railway, on which there was what was known as a 'flat fare'—that was, a fare of twopence for the whole way. **1907** *N.Y. Even. Post* (semi-weekly ed.) 11 Feb. 4 A company..will take in exactly as much money if the whole lot pay fare at two cents flat. **1908** *Daily Chron.* 21 Feb. 2/6 They had found..that the 'flat' rate system—the fixed annual rate—was unsound. **1920** *Westm. Gaz.* 1 Apr. 4/2 There..ought not to be any flat rate for all classes of horse-drawn vehicles. **1928** *Britain's Industr. Future (Liberal Ind. Inq.)* III. xvi. 193 The majority of workers are paid at flat time-rates. **1950** T. H. MARSHALL *Citizenship & Social Class* 55 Flat-rate benefits do not reduce the gaps between different incomes. **1958** *Ann. Reg.* 1957 92 Labour offered a flat-rate reduction of £100 to every taxpayer. **1963** *Times* 24 May p. vii/3 The 'sixpenny tube', or to give it its correct name—the flat fare—if adopted by London Transport, would lead straight to bankruptcy.

**14. Comb.** a. In parasynthetic adjs., as *flat-backed*, *-billed*, *-breasted*, *-browed*, *-capped*, *-ched*, *-coated* (of animals), *-crowned*, *-cut*, *-decked*, *-edged*, *-ended*, *-faced*, *-floored*, *-handled*, *-heeled*, *-hoofed*, *-leaved*, *-mouthed*, *-pearled*, *-pointed*, *-ribbed*, *-roofed*, *-soled*, *-stemmed*, *-surfaced*, *-toothed*, *-topped*, *-visaged*.

**1688** R. HOLME *Armoury* II. ix. 185/1 \*Flat Backed, when it [Grey-Hound] is even between the neck, and spaces.

**1646** SIR T. BROWNE *Pseud. Ep.* III. xix. 154 \*Flat-bild birds. **1688** J. CLAYTON in *Phil. Trans.* XVII. 990 All Flat-bill'd Birds that groped for their Meat.

**1667** N. FAIRFAX *ibid.* II. 548 This Woman was as \*flat-breasted as a Man.

**1838** DICKENS *O. Twist* viii, A snub-nosed, \*flat-browed..boy.

**1947** J. MULGAN *Report on Experience* 18 Tenement houses crowded with pale, \*flat-capped working men. **1961** H. E. BATES *Now sleeps Crimson Petal* 25 A muscular flat-capped skittles player who drove a brewers' dray.

**1771** SMOLLETT *Humph. Cl.* Wks. 1806 VI. 63 She is..awkward, \*flat-chested, and stooping. **1929** Flat-chested [see CHEMICALIZE v.]. **1939** M. DICKENS *One Pair of Hands* vi. 97 It sounds so governessy and flat-chested.

**1872** 'STONEHENGE' *Dogs Brit. Isl.* (ed. 2) 89 The \*flat-coated or short-coated small St. John's or Labrador breed [of retriever]. **1902** C. J. CORNISH *Naturalist on Thames* 109 Our sheep..their wild ancestors, the active and flat-coated animals which still feed on the stony mountain-tops. **1948** C. L. B. HUBBARD *Dogs in Brit.* 227 Another of the lesser-known varieties is the Flat-coated Retriever.

- 1664 WOOD *Life* (Oxf. Hist. Soc.) II. 8 For a new hat \*flat-crown'd 7s. 6d.
- 
- 1922 JOYCE *Ulysses* 178 A \*flatcut suit of herringbone tweed.
- 
- 1884 J. COLBORNE *Hicks Pasha* 97 A \*flat-decked vessel.
- 
- 1923 D. H. LAWRENCE *Kangaroo* xiv. 311 They were walking home in a whirl of the coldest, most \*flat-edged wind they had ever known.
- 
- 1859 *Handbk. Turning* 97 A fine \*flat-ended tool.
- 
- 1859 HELPS *Friends in C.* Ser. II. II. viii. 143 The Sea..a melancholy \*flat-faced thing.
- 
- 1867 SMYTH *Sailor's Word-bk.* 304 \*Flat-floored boats.
- 
- 1676 *Lond. Gaz.* No. 1059/4 \*Flat-handled Silver Spoons.
- 
- 1725 DE FOE *Voy. round World* (1840) 267 Shoes \*flat-heeled. 1890 KIPLING *Barrack-room Ballads* (1892) 183 The hand of every honest man flat-heeled across your mouth.
- 
- 1697 *Lond. Gaz.* No. 3301/4 A..punch Horse..\*flat Hoofed.
- 
- 1926 D. H. LAWRENCE *Sun* i. 5 The \*flat-leaved cactus called prickly pear.
- 
- ?a1400 *Morte Arth.* 1088 \*Fflatt mowthede as a fluke.
- 
- 1924 E. SITWELL *Sleeping Beauty* vi. 28 Upon the \*flat-pearled and fantastic shore.
- 
- 1710 J. HARRIS *Lex. Techn.* II, \*Flat-pointed Nails.
- 
- 1684 *Lond. Gaz.* No. 1908/4 One Dark brown Gelding..a little \*flat Ribb'd. 1688 R. HOLME *Armoury* II. ix. 185/2 Flat Ribbed, is when the both side Ribbs [of a Grey-Hound] cling and are near to gather.
- 
- 1598 HAKLUYT *Voy.* III. 391 Their houses are \*flat-rooffed. 1847 DISRAELI *Tancred* IV. xii, Flat-roofed villages nestle amid groves of mulberry trees.
- 
- 1662 J. DAVIES tr. *Olearius' Voy. Ambass.* 377 Their shooes are low and \*flat-soal'd. 1849 JAMES *Woodman* ix, The..tread of the abbess in her flat-soled sandal.
- 
- 1861 MISS PRATT *Flower. Pl.* VI. 89 \*Flat-stemmed Meadow grass.
- 
- 1794 SULLIVAN *View Nat.* I. 193 Place a \*flat-surfaced bottle empty on its side.
- 
- 1766 PENNANT *Zool.* (1769) III. 9 The fossil tooth of..some \*flat-toothed fish.
- 
- 1862 ANSTED *Channel Isl.* I. ii. (ed. 2) 32 The southern islet is..\*flat-topped.
- 
- 1774 CURTIS in *Phil. Trans.* LXIV. 383 They are \*flat-visaged.
- 

b. With pr. pple. forming adj., as *flat-lying*.

1765 A. DICKSON *Treat. Agric.* (ed. 2) 284 Low flat-lying land. 1949 E. POUND *Pisan Cantos* lxxiv. 24 A nice little town in the Tyrol in a wide flat-lying valley. 1965 G. J. WILLIAMS *Econ. Geol. N.Z.* v. 55/2 (*caption*) Flat-lying lodes of the Golden Point group.

c. With *adjs.*, as *flat-icy*, *-sleek*.

1923 D. H. LAWRENCE *Kangaroo* xiv. 308 So, in the \*flat-icy wind..they crouched.

1922 E. SITWELL *Façade* 11 And finer Their black hair seemed (\*flat-sleek to see) Than the leaves of the springing Bohea.

15. Special comb., as **flat-arch** (see 1b); **flat-back**, (*a*) (see quot. 1888); (*b*) *slang*, a bed bug (Farmer); (*c*) a book whose back is flat when the book is closed; (*d*) various other technical senses (see quotes.); †**flat-bean**, a name for some species of *Lupinus*; **flat bed** [**BED** *n.* 11], a bed or frame with a horizontal surface; *spec.* (freq. *attrib.* or as *adj.*): (*a*) a printing machine with a flat printing surface; (*b*) a trailer with no top or sides; (*c*) on a sewing machine, the flat surface on which the fabric rests; **flat-bedded** *a.* (*Geol.*), having a naturally plane cleavage; **flat-bill**, a name for certain birds having broad, flat bills, e.g. a bird of the genus *Platyrhynchus*; **flat-body** (*Entom.*), the name of a moth; **flat bug**, any of the family Aradidae of bugs, which are very flat and live chiefly under the bark of trees; **flat candle**, a candle used in a flat-candlestick; **flat candlestick**, one with a broad stand and short stem; a bedroom-candlestick; **flat-car** (*U.S.*), 'a railroad-car consisting of a platform without sides or top; a platform-car' (*Cent. Dict.*); **flat chasing** (see quot. 1960); also **flat-chased** *ppl. a.* [**CHASED** *ppl. a.*<sup>2</sup>]; **flat chisel**, a smoothing chisel; **flat-coil**, a pond-snail of the genus *Planorbis*, having its shell coiled in a plane; so **flat-coiled** *ppl. a.*; **flat-compounded** *a.*, *Electr. Engin.* [**COMPOUND** *v.* 2f] (see quot. 1940); **flat-crown** (*Arch.*) (*a*) = **CORONA** 4; (*b*) a popular name for two trees, *Albizia gummifera* and *A. adianthifolia*, both found in southern Africa; **flat-earth** *a.*, of or pertaining to the theory that the earth is flat; so **flat-earthier**, **flat-earth-man**; **flat-feet** (see quot.); **flat-fell seam** (see quot. 1964); **flat field** *Photogr.* (see quotes. 1904 and 1918); **flat film** *Photogr.*, film on a card or sheet (opp. *roll film*); also *ellipt.* as **flat**; **flat finish** (see quot. 1940); **flat-four** *a.*, of a four-cylinder engine in which two cylinders are placed on each side of the crankshaft and all the cylinders are parallel to the ground; **flat-hammer**, 'the hammer first used by the gold-beater in swaging out a pile of quarters or pieces of gold ribbon' (Knight); †**flat-house**, ? a sheriff's office, a roofed shed for impounded animals; **flat impression** (*Printing*), see **flat-pull**; **flat joint**, (*a*) *Building* (see quot. 1904); (*b*) *U.S. slang* (see quot. 1914); **flat-knitting**, a knitting process in which the needles on which the yarn is spun are set in a straight line; so **flat-knit** *a.*, of a fabric made by flat-knitting; †**flat-lap**, a term describing a particular posture of the leaves of a plant (see quot.); **flat-lead**, sheet lead; **flat-minded** *a.* (see quot. 1928); **flat move** (*slang*: see quot.); **flat nail** (see quot.); **flat-orchil**, a kind of lichen, *Roccella fusiformis*, used as a

dye (Ogilvie 18.); **flat pea**: see *PEA*<sup>1</sup> 3; †**flat-piece**, a shallow drinking-cup; **flat pliers**, pliers having the holding part or jaws flat; **flat pointing** *Building* (see quot. 1940); hence **flat-joint pointing**; **flat-pressing** (see quot.); **flat pull** *Printing* (see quot.); **flat race**, a race over clear and level ground, as opposed to hurdle-racing or steeple-chasing; whence **flat-racer**, **-racing**; **flat-rail**, 'a railroad rail consisting of a simple flat bar spiked to a longitudinal sleeper' (Knight); **flat-ring** *a.*, denoting an armature taking the form of a flat ring; **flat rod** (see quot.); **flat-rolled ppl. a.**, formed by rolling between smooth cylindrical rollers; **flat-roof** *v. trans.*, to cover with a flat roof; **flat rope** (see quotes.); **flat-sawn** *a.* (see quot. 1957); **flat screen**, (*a*) a television screen that is flat rather than gently curved; usu. *attrib.* with hyphen; (*b*) a computer display that is thin in relation to its two visible dimensions; **flat seam** *Naut.* (see quot.); **flat-sheets pl.** (*a*) *Mining* (see quotes.); (*b*) *Geol. and Mining*, 'thin beds, flat veins, or blanket veins or deposits of some mineral usually different from the adjacent layers; often contact-deposits' (*Standard Dict.*); **flat silver** *N. Amer.*, knives, forks, spoons, and other eating or serving utensils made of or plated with silver (Webster 1961); **flat-skein work** *Basket-making* (see quot. 1943 and *SKEIN* *n.*<sup>2</sup> 1); **flat slab** *Building*, a concrete slab reinforced in two or more directions to enable it to be supported by columns, etc., without the use of beams or girders; also *attrib.*, as **flat-slab construction**; **flat sour**, fermentation of tinned products by the action of micro-organisms which produce acid but not gas, and so do not cause distension of the tin; also (with hyphen) *attrib.*; **flat space**, Euclidean space; **flat spin** *Aeronaut.*, a spin in which an aircraft descends in tight circles while not departing greatly from a horizontal attitude; *fig.*, a frenzy of agitation, a worried confusion of mind; **flat spot** (see quot. 1940); **flat-square** *a.*, of a file: one whose section is a rectangle; **flat-tail mullet**, an Australian fish (*Liza argentea*); also **flat-tailed mullet**; **flat-tool**, (*a*) 'a turning chisel which cuts on both sides and on the end, which is square' (Knight); (*b*) an elongated conical tool used in seal-engraving for bringing ribbons or monograms to a flat surface (*Cent. Dict.*); **flat-top**, (*a*) *U.S.*, a name for *Vernonia noveboracensis*; (*b*) *U.S. slang*, an aircraft-carrier; also **baby flat-top**, a smaller (cargo, etc.) vessel converted into a carrier; (*c*) used *attrib.* of a style of hairdressing; **flat tuning** *Radio* [*TUNING* *vbl. n.*] (see quot. 1940); **flat turn** *Aeronaut.* (see quot. 1935); **flat-ware**, (*a*) 'plates, dishes, saucers and the like, collectively, as distinguished from hollow-ware' (*Cent. Dict.*); (*b*) (esp. *U.S.*) domestic cutlery; **flat water** *local*, patches of oily water in the sea, indicating the presence of pilchards; **flat work**, (*a*) *Mining* (see quot. 1851); (*b*) a piece of material of any kind wrought into a flat shape; (*c*) *Laundry* (see quot. 1928); **flat-worm** (*Zool.*), an animal of the class Platyhelmintha. Also **FLAT-BOAT**, **-BOTTOM**, **-CAP**, **-FISH**, **-FOOT**, **HEAD**, etc.

1888 ADDY *Sheffield Gloss.*, \**Flat-back*, a common knife with its back filed down after it is put together. 1904 GOODCHILD & TWENEY *Technol. & Sci. Dict.* 226/1 *Flat backs*, whole bound or half bound books whose backs have the leather firmly glued or pasted to them. 1940 Chambers's *Techn. Dict.* 339/1 *Flat-back (Moulding)*, a pattern having a flat upper surface at the joint of the mould, so lying wholly within the drag or bottom half. 1957 MANKOWITZ & HAGGAR *Encycl. Eng. Pott. & Porc.* 53/1 Intended for display on the mantelpiece; often of a 'flat-back' type, modelled and decorated on one side only. 1963 C. R. COWELL et al. *Inlays, Crowns & Bridges* xii. 140 'Steele's' flatbacks—these are useful for patients with close bites.

1597 GERARDE *Herbal* 1042 Of the \*flat Beane called Lupine. 1657 W. COLES *Adam in Eden* ccxii.

333 Some call them [Lupines] Flat-beans.

**1875** J. SOUTHWARD *Dict. Typogr.* (ed. 2) 48 Hoe's Machines... The forme of type is locked~up in the bed by means of screws, by which the type is held as securely as in the ordinary manner upon a \*flat bed. **1886-7** *Proc. Inst. Civil Engineers* LXXXIX. 247 In the second class is the single-cylinder machine—a cylinder impressing a forme of type on a flat bed, and printing one side only. **1892** J. SOUTHWARD *Princ. & Progr. Printg. Machin.* 108 The machine printed 3,145 sheets in the hour—a rate that is altogether unprecedented for a flat bed cylinder machine. **1906** F. H. HITCHCOCK *Building a Book* 121 In the latter part of 1812, the first flat-bed cylinder press was erected by them [*sc.* Koenig and Bauer] in Bensley's office. **1927** E. ST. JOHN *Pract. Hints Presswk.* p. xvi, For the general run of commercial work the two-revolution flat-bed cylinder press is preferred. **1932** C. C. KNIGHTS *Printing* 69 As the name implies the flat-bed machine has a flat surface or bed upon which the material to be printed is laid. **1959** *Times* 14 Jan. 12/4 The future will see photocomposition allied to letterpress printing, both flatbed and rotary, on an increasing scale. **1960** M. SPARK *Ballad of Peckham Rye* iv. 67 They are advertising for ten twin-needle flat-bed machinists. **1961** *Amer. Speech* XXXVI. 272 *Flat bed*, a truck, semitrailer, or trailer with no sides or top. **1970** *Which?* Aug. 237/2 All the [sewing] machines we tested this time had a flat bed. **1971** P. DRISCOLL *White Lie Assignment* x. 82 Two long flatbed trailers were parked with canvas-covered cylinders on them.

**1793** SMEATON *Edystone L.* §221 No quarries affording \*flat bedded stones having occurred.

**1860** GOSSE *Rom. Nat. Hist.* 17 The \*flat-bill uttered his plaintive wail.

**1819** G. SAMOUELLE *Entomol. Compend.* 443 *Tinea applanata*, the common \*Flat-body. **1860** J. CURTIS *Farm Insects* 411 The..Flat-body Moth.

**1895** J. H. & A. B. COMSTOCK *Man. Study of Insects* xiv. 139 The \*flat-bugs..are the flattest of all bugs, the body appearing as if it had been stepped upon. **1921** *Trans. Amer. Entom. Soc.* XLVII. 1 Every entomologist is in a general way familiar with the 'flatbugs' of the Hemipterous genus *Aradus*, which are often met with beneath the dead bark of trees, but no systematic treatment of the numerous..species has ever been attempted. **1923** W. E. BRITTON *Guide Insects Connecticut* IV. 11 It is believed the *Aradidae* or 'flat bugs', are predatory on insects and other small animals. **1959** SOUTHWOOD & LESTON *Land & Water Bugs* ii. 13 *A. cinnamomeus* differs from other flatbugs whose habits are known in not being a fungus feeder, for it lives on pine sap.

**1836-9** DICKENS *Sk. Boz, Scenes* xv. (1892) 125 The flaring \*flat candle with the long snuff.

**1493** *Bury Wills* (1850) 81 Another \*flatt candelstyke of laton. **1859** DICKENS *Haunted Ho.* v. 22 A bedroom candlestick and candle, or a flat candlestick and candle—put it which way you like.

**1881** *Chicago Times* 18 June, Demolishing a couple of \*flat-cars.

**1956** G. TAYLOR *Silver* iv. 73 \*Flat-chased or embossed in such low relief as to be almost indistinguishable from flat-chasing. **1960** H. HAYWARD *Antique Coll.* 119/1 \**Flat chasing*, surface decoration in low relief on precious metal, produced by hammering with small blunt tools. The characteristic feature of the process is that no metal is removed.

**1688** R. HOLME *Armoury* III. viii. 359/1 The third is termed a Chissel, or a \*Flat Chissel. **1881** YOUNG *Every man his own Mechanic* §568 The flat chisel..is used for smoothing the work, or taking off the remaining wood that was left by the gouge.

**1901** E. STEP *Shell Life* xvii. 319 The next section of these Pond-snails comprises the \*Flat-coils

(*Planorbis*), made familiar by the typical species—the Ram's-horn or Trumpet-snail. **1926** A. E. ELLIS *Brit. Snails* II. 118 The snails of this family [*sc.* Planorbidae] are popularly called Ram's-horns, Flat-coils, or Trumpet Snails.

**1901** E. STEP *Shell Life* xiii. 234 The *Skenea planorbis*, whose reddish or tawny shell at first sight looks like one of the small fresh-water \*Flat-coiled Shells (*Planorbis*), whence its specific name.

**1915** R. LANKESTER *Divers. Nat.* xxxiv. 346 The flat-coiled pond-snail, *Planorbis*.

**1909** WEBSTER I. 828/1 \*Flat-compounded. **1940** *Chambers's Techn. Dict.* 339/1 *Flat-compounded*, said of a compound-wound generator the series winding of which has been so designed that the voltage remains constant at all loads between no-load and full-load.

**1704** J. HARRIS *Lex. Techn.* I. s.v. *Corona*, The \*Flat-Crown, is..a particular Member in the Dorick Gate..it hath six times more Breadth than Projecture. **1868** J. CHAPMAN *Trav. Int. S. Afr.* II. 451 The umbrella-like Flat-crown, common in the Berea-bush near D'Urban. **1887** C. A. MOLONEY *Sk. Forestry W. Afr.* 346 Flatcrown of Natal. **1897** 'MARK TWAIN' *More Tramps Abroad* lxviii, The 'flat-crown' (should be flat-roof)—half a dozen naked branches, full of elbows, slant upward like artificial supports, and fling a roof of delicate foliage out in a horizontal platform as flat as a floor. **1950** *Cape Argus* 18 Mar. (Mag. Section) 7/7 The Cape ebony, white stinkwood, flatcrown, essenhout and umzimbiti, trees that yield beautiful timber for furniture-making, grow in profusion in every kloof.

**1905** *Westm. Gaz.* 25 Feb. 3/2 This \*Flat-Earth Society. **1909** *Ibid.* 21 Sept. 4/1 A lifelong upholder of the flat-earth theory. **1922** A. S. EDDINGTON *Theory of Relativity* 26 Those who adhered to the flat-earth theory must hold that the flat map gives the true size of Greenland.

**1934** *Punch* 21 Nov. 562/1 Without being a bigoted \*flat-earthier, he [*sc.* Mercator] perceived the nuisance..of fiddling about with globes..in order to discover the South Seas. **1963** *Times* 11 May 6/2 His treatment of appoggiaturas was that of a Flat Earther with spasmodic doubts.

**1908** G. B. SHAW *Fabian Essays* p. xii, Fewer votes than one would have thought possible for any human candidate, were he even a \*flat-earth-man. **1951** AUDEN *Nones* (1952) 47 Lovers of small numbers go benignly potty,..are Millerites, Baconians, Flat-Earth-Men.

**1873** *Slang Dict.*, \*Flat-feet, the battalion companies in the Foot Guards.

**1939** M. B. PICKEN *Lang. Fashion* 58/2 \*Flat fell seam, flat, sturdy seam. **1964** *McCall's Sewing* ii. 28/2 *Flat-fell*, seam used on shirts, slacks and other tailored garments in which one seam is trimmed and the other stitched over it. Gives a flat, finished seam on both sides of the garment.

**1841** R. HUNT *Pop. Treat. Art of Photogr.* 80 A photographic camera should possess, according to Sir John Herschel, 'the three qualities of a \*flat field, a sharp focus,..and a perfect achromaticity'. **1878** W. ABNEY *Treat. Photogr.* 205 Since the manufacture of non-distorting doublets giving a fairly flat field has been perfected. **1893** *Jrnl. Soc. Arts* XLI. 384/2 The efforts of opticians..are being continually put forth in the direction of the attainment of..as near approach as possible to a 'flat field'. **1904** GOODCHILD & TWENEY *Technol. & Sci. Dict.* 226/1 A lens is said to give a flat field when the image of a distant object is equally in focus, whatever part of the screen it occupies. **1918** *Photo-Miniature* Mar. 20 *Flat field*, applied to a lens which, when photographing a flat subject, e.g., a painting, gives equal definition in all parts of the plate. **1966** LACOUR & LATHROP *Photo Technol.* x. 115/1 Enlarging lenses are designed to produce an extremely flat field.

**1950** *Rev. Documentation* XVII. 134 (*title*) The Microcopy on \*flat film as an aid in documentation.



**1958** *Engineering* 31 Jan. 155/1 The two basic types—roll-film and ‘flats’, the latter including micro-cards and micro-sheet (or micro-fiches).

**1913** *Sat. Evening Post* 12 Apr. 43 (Advt.). The beautiful, modern \*flat finish for interior walls and ceilings. **1940** *Chambers's Techn. Dict.* 339/1 *Flat finish*, a non-glossy finish, showing no brilliancy of surface.

**1959** ‘*Motor*’ *Man.* (ed. 36) 38 They [*sc.* each pair of cylinders] are at 180 degrees and the cylinders are parallel with the ground. This is known as the \*flat-four type. **1961** *New Scientist* 19 Jan. 162/2 The main features of the Ferguson ‘flat four’ design are aimed at obtaining the utmost rigidity of the crankcase.

**1698** S. SEWALL *Diary* 9 Mar. (1878) I. 472 Our Horses are broke out of themselves, or else are taken out of the stable..Sent presently to their \*flat-house, but hear nothing of them. **1706** *Ibid.* 25 Mar. (1879) II. 157 Surpris'd the Sheriff and his Men at the Flat-house.

**1890** JACOBI *Printing* xxi. 185 Pull three or four good sound \*flat impressions, with not too much ink.

**1825** J. NICHOLSON *Oper. Mech.* 555 In one kind of pointing, the courses are simply marked with the end of a trowel, called \*flat-joint pointing. **1904** GOODCHILD & TWENEY *Technol. & Sci. Dict.* 126/1 *Flat joint*, a mortar joint flush with the face of the wall. **1914** JACKSON & HELLYER *Vocab. Criminal Slang* 34 *Flat joint*. Current amongst open-air sure-thing men who operate at circus gatherings, fairs, carnivals, any gaming establishment... The ‘Shells’; ‘three card monte’; the ‘eight die case’..are all grafting flat joints. The term is derived from the essentiality in all of these crooked devices of a counter or other flat area across or upon which the swindle may be conducted. **1963** MENCKEN *Amer. Lang.* xi. 731 Carnival workers, and especially *strong-joint* or *flat-joint* operators, have a more or less secret argot.

**1963** A. J. HALL *Textile Sci.* iii. 149 Large amounts of \*flat-knit fabric are produced with straight bar knitting machines. **1969** *Sears Catal.* Spring/Summer 19 Seamless stretch tights knit of nylon... Flat knit heels and toes.

**1939** M. B. PICKEN *Lang. Fashion* 58/2 \*Flat knitting, type of knitting done in flat form.

**1671** GREW *Anat. Plants* I. iv. §16 Where the Leaves are not so thick set, as to stand in the Bow-Lap, there we have the Plicature, or the \*Flat-Lap.

**1885** G. MEREDITH *Diana of Crossways* I. i. 15 One is not astonished at her appearing an ‘actress’ to the \*flat-minded. **1928** *Funk's Stand. Dict.* I. 937/3 *Flat-minded*, lacking mental power, imagination, or feeling; devoid of prominent characteristics.

**1812** J. H. VAUX *Flash Dict.* s.v., Any attempt or project that miscarries, or any act of folly or mismanagement in human affairs is said to be a \*flat move.

**c1850** *Rudim. Navig.* (Weale) 135 \*Flat nails are small sharp-pointed nails, with flat thin heads.

**1422-3** *Abingdon Acc.* (Camden) 92 Item j. \*flatpece argenti. **1530** PALSGR. 220/2 Flatte pece, tasse. **1535** COVERDALE *1 Kings* vii. 50 Flat peces, charges, basens.

**1881** YOUNG *Every man his own Mechanic* §275 A pair of \*flat pliers, of the ordinary kind.

**1891-3** *Dict. Techn. & Trade Terms of Arch. Design* 110/1 What is called ‘\*flat pointing’ is done by marking the joints of the brickwork with a flat trowel. **1900** *Eng. Dial. Dict.* II. 386/1 *Kentish*. In flat-

pointing the mortar is smeared up against, and on to, the edges of each brick. **1940** *Chambers's Techn. Dict.* 339/2 *Flat pointing*, the method of pointing, used for uncovered internal wall surfaces, in which the stopping is formed into a smooth flat joint in the plane of the wall.

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**1881** *Porcelain Wks. Worcester* 21 The manufacture of plates and dishes is called \*Flat Pressing.

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**1888** JACOBI *Printers' Voc.*, \**Flat pull* (or *impression*), a simple proof without under or overlaying.

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**1848** THACKERAY *Bk. Snobs* xv, Sporting Snobs..who..rode \*flat races.

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**1886** EARL OF SUFFOLK, etc. *Racing* (Badm. Libr.) i. 37 A few \*flat-racers have come over [from Ireland] to us.

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*Ibid.*, *Steeple-chasing* ii. 289 As a rule, \*flat-racing is a bad preparation for the jumper. **1890** *Daily News* 17 Feb. 3/5 When the flat-racing season begins.

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**1884** S. P. THOMPSON *Dyn.-Electr. Mach.* iii. 29 The \*flat-ring armature may be said to present a distinct type from those in which the ring tends to the cylindrical form. **1893** HAWKINS & WALLIS *Dynamo* 122 A second magnet..can be presented to the other face of the flat-ring core. **1902** *Encycl. Brit.* XXVII. 577/2 The discoidal or flat-ring method.

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**1860** *Ure's Dict. Arts* (ed. 5) II. 226 \**Flat rods* in mining, a series of rods for communicating motion from the engine, horizontally, to the pumps or other machinery in a distant shaft.

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**1935** H. L. CAMPBELL *Working of Steel* iii. 29 Steel is supplied in the form of strips, sheets, plates, and bars. The following definitions apply to these classes of \*flat-rolled steel. **1962** *Times* 8 Feb. 3/1 Stainless flat-rolled products.

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**1717** TABOR in *Phil. Trans.* XXX. 562 The Græcians us'd to cover or \*Flat-roof their Houses with these [tessellated] Pavements.

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**1874** KNIGHT *Dict. Mech.* I. 878/2 Some \*flat ropes, for mining-shafts, are made by sewing together a number of ropes, making a wide, flat band.

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**1882** W. D. HAY *Brighter Britain* I. v. 120 Rough split sections of the great logs..fixed in the ground..so as to bring their \*flat-sawn tops upon a uniform level. **1957** *N.Z. Timber Jnl.* Mar. 52/1 *Flat sawn*, timber cut tangentially to the annual rings and giving flat grain.

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**1970** *New Scientist* 4 June 474/1 The development of \*flat-screen television has been held back by the complexity of scanning systems for thin, flat cathode ray tubes. **1978** *Government Data Systems* July/Aug. 24/3 The displays of the future may well be electrochromic, cathodochromic, PLZT, gas plasma, flat-screen liquid crystals, or electroluminescent. **1983** *Austral. Personal Computer* Sept. 5/2 (*heading*) No rise for flat screen displays. **1986** *Times* 1 Feb. 11/1 Tomorrow's home entertainment—flat-screen, high quality television.

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**1867** SMYTH *Sailor's Word-bk.*, \**Flat-seam*, the two edges or selvages of canvas laid over each other and sewed down.

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**1869** R. B. SMYTH *Goldfields Victoria* 611 \**Flat-sheets*, sheet iron flooring at the brace and in the plats and junction of drives to facilitate the turning and management of trucks. **1892** *Northumbld. Gloss.*, *Flat sheets*, smooth iron plates laid over an even floor at a pit bank, on which the tubs are run to be emptied or returned to the cage.

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**1928** E. POST *Etiquette* 626 The most complete list of \*flat silver possible. **1968** *Canad. Antiques Coll.* June 10/3 Of what we call 'flat silver' there were of course spoons.

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**1912** T. OKEY *Introd. Basket-Making* xii. 143 Except for \*Flat Skein work, a purely local industry, skeins are chiefly used by the ordinary basket-maker for handling, and for siding up light work. **1943** A. G. KNOCK *Willow Basketry* 25 What can be called Flat-Skein Work is being used, each stroke lying as nearly as possible flatly upon the one underneath.

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**1906** C. S. HILL in Buel & Hill *Reinforced Concrete Constr.* (ed. 2) II. vii. 175 (*heading*) \*Flat slab construction. *Ibid.*, The arrangement of the reinforcement in flat-slab floors differs with the form of reinforcement used and with the form of slab arrangement. *Ibid.* 176 The accompanying drawings..show flat slab constructions with Columbian bars. **1960** K. BILLIG *Struct. Concrete* II. xiv. 537 Because of the absence of exposed corners, flat-slab construction is less vulnerable in case of fire than beam-and-girder construction.

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**1926** *Delineator* July 52 In the canning of greens, asparagus, peas, beans and corn, \*flat sour seems to be responsible for more failures than any other one factor. **1943** J. G. BAUMGARTNER *Canned Foods* iv. 63 The facultative anaerobic group of 'flat-sour' organisms are so called because they attack carbohydrates with resultant acid..formation. *Ibid.* 64 Products containing sugar or starch are particularly liable to undergo severe spoilage by the 'flat-sour' organisms.

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[**1873** W. K. CLIFFORD tr. Riemann in *Nature* 1 May 16/1 These manifoldnesses in which the square of the line-element may be expressed as the sum of the squares of complete differentials I will call *flat*.]  
**1883** *Encycl. Brit.* XV. 664/1 The space with which we are familiar..has been called \*flat space or homaloidal space to distinguish it from other spaces in which the curvature is not zero. **1949** SYNGE & SCHILD *Tensor Calculus* viii. 295 A space in which the curvature tensor vanishes identically is called *flat*. **1953** B. SPAIN *Tensor Calculus* v. 56 In a flat space the property of parallelism is independent of the choice of a curve.

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**1917** 'CONTACT' *Airman's Outings* iv. 104 Suddenly the machine quivered, swung to the left, and nearly put itself in a \*flat spin. **1919** W. H. DOWNING *Digger Dial*. 23 *Flat spin*, to be in difficulties. Only applied to an airman. 'On a flat spin', in a bad position. **1928** *Daily Mail* 7 May 6/4 When a person becomes excited or confused, aviators say 'He went into a flat spin'. **1930** *Punch* 30 Apr. 500 Getting into a flat spin over the perishing spelling. **1957** M. SPARK *Comforters* vi. 126 It is possible for a man matured in religion by half a century of punctilious observance..to go into a flat spin when faced with some trouble which does not come within a familiar category. **1967** D. PIGGOTT *Gliding* (ed. 2) xv. 90 Recovery from a flat spin is slow and unpredictable.

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**1935** C. G. BURGE *Compl. Bk. Aviation* 307/2 '\*Flat spot', a term applied to a particular form of hesitation when the throttle is opened from the slow running position. **1940** *Chambers's Techn. Dict.* 339/2 *Flat spot*, in a carburettor, a point during increase of air flow (resulting from increased throttle opening or speed) at which the air-fuel ratio becomes so weak as to prevent good acceleration. **1962** *Which?* Apr. (Suppl.) 74/1 Drivers complained repeatedly of a carburation 'flat spot'.

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**1831** J. HOLLAND *Manuf. Metal* I. 299 The files are \*flat square.

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**1896** F. G. AFLALO *Nat. Hist. Austral.* 232 The \*Flat-Tailed Mullet is also met with in estuaries. **1908** D. G. STEAD *Edible Fishes N.S.W.* 43 In form the Flat-tail Mullet is more compressed or slab-sided than the Sea Mullet. **1951** T. C. ROUGHLEY *Fish Austral.* 35 The flat-tail mullet is found in all states except Tasmania.

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**1853** O. BYRNE *Artisan's Handbk.* 28 \*Flat tools for turning hard wood, ivory, and steel.

**1859** BARTLETT *Dict. Amer., Iron Weed*, a plant, called in the North-eastern States \*Flat Top. **1943** F. PRATT *Navy has Wings* 190 'Scratch one flat top,' Commander Dixon's voice had shouted..through the ship's radio. **1943** *Time* 22 Nov. 26/3 That beats a previous high scorer: the escort carrier 'B'.., another 'baby flat-top'. **1955** C. S. FORESTER *Good Shepherd* 170 Escort vessels and destroyers and baby flat-tops were coming off the ways as fast as America and England and Canada could build them. **1956** L. S. TRUSTY *Art & Sci. Barbering* 93 The principal feature of the Flat Top style is the flat top... The top should be visualized as flat and smooth as the bristles of a brush and in length from 1 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. **1957** *N.Y. Times* 2 June VI. 26/1 A stiff version [of the crew cut] is the Flat Top Crew.

**1933** 'R. STRANGER' *Dict. Wireless Terms* 72 \*Flat tuning. A receiver is said to possess flat tuning when a station can be heard over a wide range of movement of the condenser dial. **1940** *Chambers's Techn. Dict.* 339/2 Flat tuning, inability of a tuning system to discriminate sharply between signals having different frequencies.

**1934** V. M. YEATES *Winged Victory* i. ix. 86 An Avro would do anything you wanted..even do a \*flat turn just for fun if you kicked the rudder with decision. **1935** P. W. F. MILLS *Elem. Practical Flying* vi. 88 Turns made without any bank, or flat turns, as they are called.

**1851** *Illustr. Catal. Gt. Exhib.* III. III. 719/1 Plates, dishes, saucers, &c., termed '\*flat ware', are made from moulds which form the inside of the article, the exterior being given by 'profiles' of the required outline, made of fired clay, glazed. **1895** *Montgomery Ward Catal.* 188 Solid Sterling Flat Ware... Tea Spoons..Dessert Forks..Sugar Shells..Butter Knives. **1901** *N.Y. Even. Post* 7 May 4/5 A complete line of Rogers Flatware. **1914** G. ATHERTON *Perch of Devil* II. 241 A magnificent silver service, from many dozens of 'flat ware', to silver platters. **1952** M. MCCARTHY *Groves of Academe* (1953) ix. 198 She seemed to fix her eyes on the flatware and napery with the same hypnotised effort that dragged her fork to her lips and back again.

**1927** *Glasgow Herald* 10 Sept. 4 We cruise back and forward watching for signs. The chief of these is '\*flat' water, as the men call the smooth, oily patches that so puzzle landward folk.

**1653** E. MANLOVE *Lead-Mines* 264 Roof-works, \*Flat-works, Pipe-works. **1686** PLOT *Staffordsh.* ix. §7. 335 In hammering of this flat-work they beat the plates first one by one. **1851** TAPPING *Gloss. to Manlove, Flat Work*, a mining term descriptive of a species of lead mine, so called from its form, which is broad, spreading horizontally, not without inclination. [**1906** *Westm. Gaz.* 14 Nov. 9/11 Speaking generally, there has certainly been no rise during recent years, especially in what we call 'flat' articles—tablecloths, and such things.] **1921** *Electrician* 11 Mar. 304/2 In the United States..some women use their power wringer as a cold mangle for the smaller pieces of 'flat-work'. **1928** *Funk's Stand. Dict.* i. 937/3 Flat work (Laundry), articles that are not to be starched, as, sheets or pillow-cases, in distinction from starched articles, as, waists, collars, etc.

**B. adv.** (Cf. A. 2, in many examples of which the word admits of being taken as adv.)

†1. By horizontal measurement. *Obs.*

**1663** GERBIER *Counsel* 82 Fret seelings..the workmanship only at five shillings a yard, measured flat.

**2. Downright, absolutely, positively, plainly; entirely, fully, quite. Cf. DEAD adv. 2.**

**1577-87** HOLINSHED *Chron.* II. 33/2 As for Gerrot it differeth flat from Giralde. **1591** R. GREENHAM *Serm.* i. (1599) 98 They that are thus borne again..cannot fall flat away by sin. **1601** DENT *Pathw. Heaven* 246, I am flat of your minde. **1703** MOXON *Mech. Exerc.* 114 The Iron of a Plane is said to be set Rank, when its edge stands so flat below the Sole of the Plane, that..it will take off a thick shaving. **1770** JENNER *Placid Man* II. 117 Sir Harry contradicted him flat. **1784** R. BAGE *Barham Downs* II. 242 That wild thing, Peggy, told me, flat and plain, if I did so again, she would pull it off. **1838** DICKENS *Nich. Nick.* lxiv. 621, I be not the mun to crow..so I tell 'ee flat. **1842** *Spirit of Times* 21 May 138/1 Every friend of Old Whitenose would have been flat broke! **1859** BARTLETT *Dict. Amer.*, *Flat broke*, utterly bankrupt, entirely out of money. **1933** W. S. MAUGHAM *Sheppey* (1952) II. 244 You haven't turned it [*sc.* the governor's invitation] down flat?

**3. †a. Directly, exactly. With respect to the quarter of the heavens: Due. *flat against: lit.* and *fig.* directly contrary to. Cf. DEAD adv. 3.**

**1531** TINDALE *Exp. John* (1537) 28 When the Sonne is flat sowth. **1538** LELAND *Itin.* IV. 54 Then Porte Crokerton flat Est. **1562** COOPER *Answ. Priv. Masse* 80b, Christes wordes and institution is so flat agaynste you, as you [etc.]. **1653-4** WHITELOCKE *Jrnl. Swed. Emb.* (1772) I. 123 The wind continued flatt and high against Whitelocke's course.

**b. Exactly, precisely, not exceeding the stated value: used of amounts, distances, and the like. orig. *U.S.***

**1909** WEBSTER 827/3 *Flat*...Without excess; exactly; due;—used chiefly of numbers or quantities; as, to run a hundred yards in ten seconds *flat*. **1945** *Sat. Rev.* 4 Aug. 22 This one, for instance,..all you fiendishly clever people will solve in no time flat. **1962** *Guardian* 5 July 1/5 In no time flat the very voice of Mrs Chichester..was on the horn. **1969** J. CLARKE *Foxon's Hole* viii. 49 It took her about two minutes flat to step into jeans and sweater.

**4. (to sit) *flat down*: plump on the ground.**

**1852** MRS. STOWE *Uncle Tom's C.* xxviii, Sitting flat down on the floor.

**C. *absol.* and *n.*<sup>3</sup>**

**1. *absol.* (quasi-*n.*)** That which is flat. ***on the flat***: on paper or canvas; on a smooth surface, as opposed to *in relief*. ***from the flat***: from a painting or drawing on paper, canvas, etc. (opposed to *from the round*).

**1862** J. C. ROBINSON *Ital. Sculpt.* 60 Luca..simultaneously with his enamelled terra-cotta sculptures, also practised painting..on the flat. **1884** *Cassell's Fam. Mag.* Mar. 216/1 Occupied in shading in chalk from the flat. **1885** G. ALLEN *Babylon* v, To model a composition in relief from an engraving on the flat.

**b.** The flat surface or portion (of anything); *esp.* the broad surface (of a blade) as opposed to the edge; also, the inside of the open hand, etc.

Sometimes treated as a n. admitting of a plural, as 'with the *flats* of their swords'; but *flat* is more usual.

c1374 CHAUCER *Troilus* IV. 899 (927) Beth rather to hym cause of flat than egge. 1470-85 MALORY *Arthur* XVI. viii, Syre Bors..gafe hym grete strokes with the flatte of his swerd vpon the vysage. 1626 BACON *Sylva* §145 The Strings of a..Violl..doe giue a far greater Sound, by reason of the Knot, and Board, and Concaue vnderneath, than if there were nothing but onely the Flat of a Board. 1671 GREW *Anat. Plants* I. i. §16 This Cuticle is not only spread upon the Convex of the Lobes, but also on their Flats, where they are contiguous. 1719 DE FOE *Crusoe* (1840) I. iv. 69 On the flat of the green..I resolved to pitch my tent. 1727 W. SNELGRAVE *Guinea & Slave Trade* (1734) 258 He gave me a slight blow on the Shoulder, with the flat of his Cutlace. 1779 FORREST *Voy. N. Guinea* 77 An island..like the flat of a plate turned bottom up. 1816 KEATINGE *Trav.* (1817) II. 264 The breast, loins, flat of the neck. 1828 SCOTT *F.M. Perth* iii, Striking the flat of his hand against that which the armourer expanded towards him. 1833 *Regul. Instr. Cavalry* I. 47 The flat of the thigh to the saddle. 1861 DICKENS *Gt. Expect.* xlv, Here's old Bill Barley on the flat of his back. 1885 *Manch. Exam.* 23 June 5/3 The military..cleared the piazza with the flats of their swords.

**c.** Level country. In *Horse-racing*: level ground without hedges or ditches; cf. *flat-race*; also, the level piece of turf at the end of some race-courses. Hence *gen.* The race-course.

1836 J. WILSON *Noct. Ambr. Wks.* 1855 I. 180 Sic a..body..could never hae been bred or born on the flat. 1847 G. H. H. OLIPHANT *Law conc. Horses, etc.* App. 278 A.F. Across the Flat 1 M. 2 Fur. 24 Yds. 1877 OUIDA *Puck* ix, Your young lordling spends all his..time on the 'flat'. 1886 EARL OF SUFFOLK, etc. *Racing* (Badm. Libr.) 273 In steeple-chases, hurdle races, and on the flat. 1892 J. KENT *Racing Life C. Bentinck* ii. 48 He will win..unless a crow flies down his throat as he comes across the flat.

**2. a.** A horizontal plane; a level as opposed to a slope. †*on the flat of*: on the level or plane of. †*of a flat*; *on the same flat*: on the same level or plane.

1605 BACON *Adv. Learn.* I. v. §5. 24 No perfect discoverie can bee made vppon a flatte, or a leuell. 1607 CHAPMAN *Bussy d' Ambois* Plays 1873 II. 3 They move with equall feet on the same flat. 1626 BACON *Sylva* §805 It were good to trie that Exposing of Flesh or Fish both..some height about the Earth, and vpon the Flat of the Earth. 1636 MASSINGER *Bashf. Lover* III. i, It was not in The power of fortune to remove me from The flat I firmly stood on. 1650 TRAPP *Clavis* III. 17 The cloud levelled mountains, raised vallies, and laid all of a flat; that is..made all plain. 1791 BENTHAM *Panopt.* I. 155 A declivity is..preferable by far to a dead flat. 1822 T. STRANGEWAYS *Mosquito Shore* 28 This high eminence has a flat at top of about 1500 acres.

**b.** Sometimes opposed to *fall*.

1645 FULLER *Good Th. in Bad T.* (1841) 68 Either on the flat of an ordinary temper, or in the fall of an

extraordinary temptation. **1887** RUSKIN *Præterita* II. ii. 60 Some three inches of fall to a foot of flat.

**†c.** A geometrical plane, irrespective of position; an even surface.

**1624** WOTTON *Archit.* II. 83 It comes neere an Artificiall Miracle; to make diuerse distinct Eminences appeare vpon a Flat, by force of Shadowes. **1659** MOXON *Tutor Astron.* v. (1686) 137 A Plain in Dyalling is that Flat whereon a Dyal is Described. **1674** N. FAIRFAX *Bulk & Selv.* 69 Whatsoever moves as much in a flat as it can for the earths rim, we reckon [etc.].

**†d.** A plane figure. *Obs. rare.*

**1674** S. JEAKE *Arith.* (1696) 175 Those Superficial Figures called Like Flats..are such..as bear a certain Proportion in their Sides unto each other.

**e.** A flat space or flattened surface; *spec.* a flat place on the tyre or wheel of a vehicle, or the flat space on a commutator caused by sparking or irregularity of rotation.

**1873** J. H. BEADLE *Undevel. West* xxvii. 576 Up the cliffs, where caves open inward, flats have been worked upon the rock. **1893** HAWKINS & WALLIS *Dynamo* 391 Occasionally, one or two segments in a commutator wear down below the general cylindrical surface of the rest, and form what is known as a 'flat'. **1906** *Westm. Gaz.* 3 July 10/2 Flats on the wheels may to a great extent be avoided by skilful driving, but there is a potential 'flat' in every skid. **1906** GOODCHILD & TWENEY *Technol. & Sci. Dict.* 808/1 A violent application of the brakes may cause several pounds' worth of damage by grinding a 'flat' on the tyres. **1930** *Engineering* 30 May 708/2 It was suggested that flats in railway wheels could, with advantage, be restricted to a depth of 3 mm. (0·118 in.). **1966** H. SHEPPARD *Dict. Railway Slang* (ed. 2) 5 *Flat*, worn part on wheel tyre due to skidding, or, in London Transport, due to excessive braking.

**f.** In full *optical flat*. A block or lamina (usually of glass) with one or more surfaces made accurately plane and smooth, any unevenness or departure from a perfect plane being small compared with the wavelength of light.

**1897** *Astrophysical Jrnl.* V. 134 The second..requires two large optical flats, each about one and one-half times the aperture of the telescope itself. **1932** HARDY & PERRIN *Princ. Optics* xvi. 345 Round flats are edged exactly like lenses but rectangular ones are edged somewhat differently. **1957** R. S. LONGHURST *Geom. & Physical Optics* viii. 135 If an optical flat is placed in contact with a shallow convex spherical surface, a thin air film of varying thickness results. **1971** *Nature* 30 Apr. 575/1 Silver chloride sheet..was made as flat as possible by compression between glass optical flats.

**3. Building.** **a.** The horizontal part of a roof, usually covered with lead.

**1842** BRANDE *Dict. Sc. etc.*, *Flat*, that part in the covering of a house, of lead or other metal which is laid horizontal. **1855** *Act 18-19 Vict.* c. 122 §17 Fifteen inches above the highest part of any flat or

gutter.

†b. A landing on a stair-case; also, the 'tread' of a stair.

**1730** A. GORDON *Maffei's Amphith.* 290 A Stair of 20 Steps, interrupted by a Flat. **1793** SMEATON *Edystone L.* §88 There was but one flat or tread of a step above the center of the house.

**4. Mining.** a. A horizontal bed or stratum of coal, stone, etc.; a horizontal vein of metal, or a lateral extension of a vein.

**1747** HOOSON *Miner's Dict.*, The Flat always lies on that Side of the Vein which Faces the Water. **1793** SMEATON *Edystone L.* §108 The quarry-men..cross-cut the large flats, which are laid bare. **1881** RAYMOND *Mining Gloss.*, Flat, a horizontal vein or ore-deposit auxiliary to a main vein; also any horizontal portion of a vein elsewhere not horizontal. **1883** GRESLEY *Gloss. Coal Mining, Flats*, subterraneous beds or sheets of trap rock or whin. **1886** G. A. LEBOUR *Geol. Northumb. & Durh.* (ed. 2) 62 Flat, the lateral extension of a lead vein.

b. (See quotes.)

**1846** BROCKETT *N.C. Words* (ed. 3) *Flatt*, in a coal mine, the situation where the horses take the coal tubs from the putters. **1883** GRESLEY *Gloss. Coal Mining, Flat*, a district or set of stalls separated by faults, old workings, or barriers of solid coal. **1892** *Northumbld. Gloss.*, Flat, the part of a screen at a pit where the coals rest, and are cleaned before being put into the waggon.

**5. a.** A piece of level ground; a level expanse; a stretch of country without hills, a plain; the low ground through which a river flows.

**1296** *Newminster Cartul.* (1878) 144 Stokwelflatte..Seruonreflatte. c**1340** *Gaw. & Gr. Knt.* 507 Fallez vpon fayre flat. ?a**1400** in *Cartul. Abb. de Seleby* (Yorks. Rec. Ser.) II. 42 Xij seliones jacentes in iij locis sive flattes. **1510** in *Yorksh. Archæol. Jnl.* VII. 59 note, One parcel of land called Peeston's flatt. **1602** SHAKES. *Ham.* V. i. 275 Till of this flat a Mountaine you haue made. **1695** BLACKMORE *Pr. Arth.* i. 200 Some range the Flats, and Scour the Champaign Land. **1759** B. MARTIN *Nat. Hist. Eng.* I. 45 A large Flat of barren, heathy ground. **1765-75** P. POND in C. M. Gates *Five Fur Traders* (1933) 53 The wind took the Canew up in the Air—Leat hir fall on the frozen flat. **1811** J. FAREY *Gen. View Agric. Derbysh.* I. i. 133 Alluvial flat of loam or sandy loam has accumulated upon the Gravel. **1852** THACKERAY *Esmond* I. iii, A large pleasant green flat, where the village of Castlewood stood. **1857** R. B. PAUL *Lett. fr. Canterbury, N.Z.* iv. 68 The flat on which Mr. Gebbie's house stands. **1877** A. B. EDWARDS *Up Nile* viii. 199 The river widens away before us; the flats are green on either side. **1888** 'R. BOLDREWOOD' *Robbery under Arms* (1889) i. 6 Here it widened out into a large, well-grassed flat. **1944** *Living off Land* iii. 54 These mulga flats contain rocky boulders. **1968** K. WEATHERLY *Roo Shooter* 130 The doe usually fed on the plateau, but.., she sometimes came down on to the flats.



*fig.* **1685** DRYDEN *Pref. 2nd Misc. Wks.* 1800 III. 49 Milton's Paradise Lost is admirable; but am I..bound to maintain, that there are no flats amongst his elevations? **18..** DE QUINCEY *Convers. Wks.* 1863 XIII. 176 Very often it [conversation] sinks into flats of insipidity through mere accident. **1878** MORLEY *Vauvenargues Crit. Misc.* 26 The mere bald and sterile flats of character.

**b.** A tract of low-lying marshy land; a swamp.

**1610** SHAKES. *Temp.* II. ii. 2 All the infections that the Sunne suckes vp From Bogs, Fens, Flats. **1670** MILTON *Hist. Eng.* II. 53 Through bogs and dangerous flats. **1821** EARL OF DUDLEY *Lett.* 27 Nov. (1840) 294 The flats and swamps of Holland. **1859** *Autobiog. Beggar Boy* 99 The Cambridgeshire flats or marshes.

**c.** *Australian.* (See quot. 1869.)

**1869** R. B. SMYTH *Goldfields Victoria* 611 *Flat*, a low even tract of land, generally occurring where creeks unite, over which are spread many strata of sand and gravel, with the usual rich auriferous drift immediately overlying the bed-rock. **1874** G. WALCH *Head over Heels* 79 Every man on the flat left his claim. **1879** D. M. WALLACE *Australas.* iv. 68 In the gold districts such deposits form 'flats'.

**6.** Chiefly *pl.* A nearly level tract, over which the tide flows, or which is covered by shallow water; a shallow, shoal.

**1550** J. COKE *Eng. & Fr. Herald's* (1877) §155. 102 The sea is..full of flattes. **1595** SHAKES. *John V.* vi. 40. **1628** DIGBY *Voy. Medit.* (1868) 94 Wee shaped our course to gett ouer the flattes into the riuier of Thames. **1678** R. L'ESTRANGE *Seneca's Mor.* (1702) 477 When we have scap'd so many Rocks and Flatts. **1772-84** COOK *Voy.* (1790) IV. 1408 We were insensibly drawn upon a large flat, upon which lay innumerable rocks of coral, below the surface of the sea. **1813** J. THOMSON *Lect. Inflam.* 621 The boat grounded on the flats a little to the east of the pier. **1867** SMYTH *Sailor's Word-bk., Flat*..a shallow over which the tide flows..If less than three fathoms, it is called shoal or shallow.

*fig.* **1644** MILTON *Educ.* 2 Those Grammatick flats & shallows where they stuck.

**7. Agric.** †**a.** One of the larger portions into which the common field was divided; a square furlong.

**1523** FITZHERB. *Surv.* 2 If they [the acres] lye by great flattes or furlonges in the commyn felde. **1641** BEST *Farm. Bks.* (Surtees) 43 In fower dayes the said dozen shearers finished the saide flatte, and there is in it 14 through landes and two gares. **1688** R. HOLME *Armoury* II. ii. §32, 3 Ridges. Butts, Flats. **1885** *Q. Rev.* CLIX. 325 Theoretically each flat was a square of 40 poles, containing 10 acres.

†b. A tract of arable land; a cornfield. *Obs.*

1513 DOUGLAS *Aeneis* II. vii (vi). 13 The flate of cornys rank. *Ibid.* VII. xiii. 38 The 3allo corn flattis of Lyde.

c. *dial.* (See quotes.)

1879 G. F. JACKSON *Shropsh. Word-bk.*, *Flats*, same as *Feerings*. 1884 *Chesh. Gloss.*, *Flat*, a broad flat bed as distinguished from a narrow rounded butt. We speak of ploughing a field in *flats* when there is no indication of *reens*... A wide space covered by any particular crop is called a *flat*, as 'a flat o' taters'.

8. Something broad and thin. a. A thin disc.

1732 BERKELEY *Alciph.* IV. ix, Is it [a planet] not a round luminous Flat, no bigger than a Sixpence?

†b. Chiefly *pl.* Dice of a shape to fall unfairly when thrown. (Cf. A. 5b.) *Obs.*

1545 R. ASCHAM *Toxoph.* (Arb.) 54 What false dise vse they?..flattes, gourdes. 1664 J. WILSON *Cheats* IV. i. Dram. Wks. (1874) 67 Taught you the use of..the fullam, the flat, the bristle. 1711 PUCKLE *Club* 21 *note*, At dice they have the doctors, the fulloms, loaded dice, flats.

c. *slang.* in *pl.* Playing-cards. Cf. BROAD n. 6.

1812 J. H. VAUX *Flash Dict.*, *Flats*, a cant name for playing cards. 1821 D. HAGGART *Life* 56 We played at flats in a budging-crib.

d. *Cotton-spinning.* (See quot. 1874.)

1851 L. D. B. GORDON in *Art Jrnl. Illustr. Catal.* p. iv\*\*/2 The filaments, after emerging from the flats, lie in nearly parallel lines among the card teeth of the drum. 1874 KNIGHT *Dict. Mech.* I. 878/1 *Flat (Carding)*, a strip of wood clothed with bent teeth, and placed above the large cylinder of a carding-machine.

e. In a breech-loading gun: The piece of metal projecting from the breech to support the barrel.

1881 GREENER *Gun* 230 When the barrels are for breech-loaders, the flats are formed on the undersides of the breech-ends.

**f.** A flat strip of wood inserted under the inner edge of a picture-frame and projecting beyond it; usually gilded. Called also MAT.

**1886** W. G. RAWLINSON in *19th Cent.* XIX. 400 Small drawings..greatly injured by the very modern-looking deep gold flats brought close up to them.

**g.** In various uses (see quotes.).

**1688** R. HOLME *Armoury* II. 464/2 Women wear Hair..in Falls or Flats when the hair hangs loose down about the shoulders. **1804** J. ROBERTS *Penn. Farmer* 55 It is made like a gate, with five bars or flats. **1847** HALLIWELL, *Flats*, small white fresh-water fish, as roach, etc. **1858** SIMMONDS *Dict. Trade*, *Flat*..a rough piece of bone for a button mould. **1874** KNIGHT *Dict. Mech.* I. 878/1 *Flat*, a surface of size over gilding. **1888** Lockwood's *Dict. Mech. Engin.*, *Flats*, Flat Bar Iron. **1891** *Century Mag.* Feb. 526/2 The Mexican system of crushing grain by hand on the *metate*, as the flat under the millstone of the Mexicans and native Californians is called. **1893** FARMER *Slang*, *Flats*, base money. **1962** A. NISBETT *Technique Sound Studio* 253 *Flat*. (a) On a stylus, this is a surface of wear which appears on the two sides of the tip after some period of use... (b) On the rubber tyre of an idler wheel, a 'flat' is an indentation which may form if the idler is left 'parked' in contact with the drive spindle, or other surface. **1967** E. CHAMBERS *Photolitho-Offset* 272 *Flat*, a number of negatives stripped-up or assembled in position for printing-down on to a single sheet of metal.

**9. Something broad and shallow. a.** A broad, flat-bottomed boat.

**1749** W. DOUGLASS *Summary* (1755) I. 461 A large scow or flat, to carry persons, cattle, and goods with a canoe-tender. **1801** NELSON in A. Duncan *Life* (1806) 194 The enemy's..flats (lugger-rigged)..were..anchored..Three of the flats and a brig were sunk. **1867** SMYTH *Sailor's Word-bk.*, *Flats*..lighters used in river navigation, and very flat-floored boats for landing troops. **1879** F. T. POLLOK *Sport Brit. Burmah* I. 21, I..went up in the first Government steamer and flat to Prome.

**b.** A broad, shallow basket used for packing produce for the market. Cf. A. 5e.

**1640** in ENTICK *London* II. 181 Packs, trusses, flats, or maunds. **1840** *New Monthly Mag.* LIX. 267 A basket..resembling those which..they call butter-flats. **1886** *Daily News* 4 Dec. 5/4 Watercress..costs the hawker at the rate of from 16s. to 17s. a flat. **1889** A. T. PASK *Eyes Thames* 158 The Mimosa comes over in small flat hampers called 'flats'.

**c.** A shallow two-wheeled hand-cart.

**1884** *Chamb. Jrnl.* 5 Jan. 9/1 Butchers' carts, costermongers' flats, and other light conveyances.

**d.** (See quotes.)

**1791** HAMILTON *Berthollet's Dyeing* II. II. I. ii. 32 Silk treated with these galls gained in the dye-bath

or flat. **1804** CT. RUMFORD in *Phil. Trans.* XCIV. 178 The broad and shallow vessels (flats) in which brewers cool their wort.

e. *U.S.* = *flat-car*: see A. 15.

**1864** in WEBSTER.

f. Applied to articles of dress. (a) A low shoe or sandal; (b) a low-crowned hat (U.S.).

**1834** J. R. PLANCHÉ *Brit. Costume* 375 *Brogue-uirleaker*, that is flats made of untanned leather, graced their feet. **1859** BARTLETT *Dict. Amer.*, *Flat*, a broad-brimmed, low-crowned, straw hat, worn by women. **1864** MISS WETHERELL *Old Helmet* II. xvi. 269 But you will not wear that flat there? **1938** *Times* 11 Mar. 19/4 With your suit, coloured shoes and bags are favourites. Particularly chic are the crocodile 'flats' in cornflower-blue, [etc.]. **1950** A. LOMAX *Mr. Jelly Roll* (1952) i. 19 They wore what they called the St. Louis Flats and the Chicago Flats, made with cork soles and without heels and with gambler designs on the toes.

**10. Ship-building.** a. (see quot. 1867.)

**1815** *Falconer's Dict. Marine* (ed. Burney), *Flats*, in ship-building, the name given to all the timbers in midships. **1867** SMYTH *Sailor's Word-bk.*, *Flats*, all the floor-timbers that have no bevellings in midships, or pertaining to the dead-flat. **1869** E. J. REED *Shipbuild.* v. 95 Horizontal flats extending between the bulkhead and a cast iron cellular stern-post.

b. The partial deck or floor of a particular compartment.

**1869** E. J. REED *Shipbuild.* ix. 177 Iron plates similar to those used in the flats of stoke-holes. **1893** *Daily News* 3 July 5/6 Tank room, capstan engine flat, and..the patent fuel space.

**11. Theat.** A part of a scene mounted on a wooden frame which is pushed in horizontally or lowered on to the stage. Also phr., *to join the flats*: to make into a consistent whole, to give unity.

[**1746** GARRICK *Let.* 11 Dec. in *Corresp.* (1831) I. 46 He had built up the stage, but as nobody came there, he shut in a flat scene to hide it.] **1795** F. REYNOLDS *Rage* II. ii. 27 An elegant Apartment leading to Lady Sarah's Dressing-Room—the Door in the Flat. **1807** *Director* II. 331 The entire assemblage of wings and drops and flat. **1836-9** DICKENS *Sk. Boz* (1850) 259/1 A strange jumble of flats, flies, wings [etc.]. **1901** *Daily Chron.* 21 Aug. 3/4 The 'flats' of her career, so to speak, are not quite joined. **1908** *Ibid.* 29 Apr. 3/3 The 'flats' of the new edition are not very well 'joined'. **1921** G. B. SHAW *Pen Portraits* (1932) 175 Really, Henry Arthur [Jones], you might at least join your flats. **1923** — *Shaw on Theatre* (1958) 161 A pit without stalls, which jeered mercilessly when the flats would not join. **1932** E. V. LUCAS *Reading, Writing & Remembering* iii. 66 He [*sc.* Mr. Asquith] gave the reporters less work in making him grammatical and fluent than any other speaker. There was no need to join his flats. **1957**

*Oxf. Compan. Theatre* (ed. 2) 264/1 The frame of an English flat consists of four 3 × 1 in. timbers, of which the two vertical side-pieces are the Stiles, and the others, the top and bottom Rails. *Ibid.* 265/1 In the mid-nineteenth century..it was..used in the phrase 'a pair of flats', and was confined to the two separate halves of a back scene... Farther back, the word is used only adjectivally, and the full term is Flat Scene.

**12. House-painting.** A surface painted without gloss, so as to appear dead: see DEAD *a.* 13b. Also the pigment employed for this purpose. Cf. FLATTING. ***bastard flat*** (see quot.).

**1823** *Mechanic's Mag.* No. 7. 108 The rooms..were painted with Chinese Flat on walls. **1881** YOUNG *Every man his own Mechanic* §1591 *Bastard Flat* is thinned with turpentine and a little oil..To procure a good flat, it is necessary to have a perfectly even glossy ground, and it should be of the same tint, but a little darker than the finishing flat.

**13. slang.** A person who is easily taken in, and is said to be 'only half sharp'; a duffer, simpleton. Cf. A. 8. ***a prime flat*** (see quot. 1812).

**1762** GOLDSM. *Nash Wks.* (Globe) 546/2 If the flat has no money, the sailor cries, I have more money than any man in the fair. **1812** J. H. VAUX *Flash Dict.*, *Flat*..any person who is found an easy dupe to the designs of *the family* is said to be a *prime flat*. **1848** THACKERAY *Van. Fair* x, 'You wouldn't be such a flat as to let three thousand a year go out of the family.'

**14. Music.** **a.** A note lowered half a tone below the natural pitch. **b.** In musical notation, the sign *b* which indicates this lowering of the note; a ***double flat*** *bb* indicates that it must be lowered by two semitones. **c. sharps and flats:** the black keys of the keyboard of a piano.

**1589** R. HARVEY *Pl. Perc.* (1590) 21 It can neuer be goode musicke, that stands all vpon sharpes, and neuer a flat. **a1634** RANDOLPH *Muses' Looking-Gl.* IV. v, The lutenist takes flats and sharps, And out of those so dissonant notes does strike A ravishing harmony. **1669** COKAINE *Fun. Elegy T. Pilkington* Poems 78 His Flats were all harmonious. **1674** PLAYFORD *Skill Mus.* I. iv. 15, I have seen some songs with four flats. **1694** *Phil. Trans.* XVIII. 72 Flats or Half-notes to other Keys. **1706** A. BEDFORD *Temple Mus.* iii. 57 Methods of altering their Tunes, by Flats and Sharps placed at the Beginning. **1806** J. W. CALLCOTT *Mus. Gram.* v. 57 The mark now used for the Flat was originally the letter B. **1834** MEDWIN *Angler in Wales* I. 215 Twelve lines in each, of hair and Indian hurl, alternately, like the flats and sharps of a piano. **1872** BANISTER *Music* 7 A Flat, *b*, indicates the lowering of the note to which it is prefixed, one semitone.

**d. sharps and flats:** used punningly for (a) sharpeners and their victims; (b) recourse to weapons.

(a) **1801** *Sporting Mag.* XVII. 37 There are sharps and flats in Paris as well as London. **1825** C. M. WESTMACOTT *Eng. Spy* I. 368 That emporium for sharps and flats, famed Tattersall's.

(b) **1818** SCOTT *Hrt. Midl.* xxx, He was somewhat hasty with his flats and sharps.

**15.** Short for *flat-racer*.

**1811** *Sporting Mag.* XXXVIII. 168 He had one of the finest flats in the world in training.

**16.** U.S. colloq. *to give the flat*: to give a flat refusal (to a suitor). (Cf. A. 6.)

**1859** in BARTLETT *Dict. Amer.*

**17.** *attrib.* and *Comb.*, as *flat-like* adj.; **flat-catcher**, one who takes in simpletons; a swindler; also used of a horse; so *flat-catching* vbl. n.

**1821** MONCRIEFF *Tom & Jerry* I. vi. (1828) 22 Do you think we shall get the \*flat-catcher [a horse] off to-day? **1841** *Blackw. Mag.* Aug. 202 Buttoners are those accomplices of thimblerriggers..whose duty it is to act as flat-catchers or decoys, by personating flats. **1864** *Lond. Rev.* 18 June 643/2 'The Bobby' or chinked-back horse, is another favourite flat-catcher.

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**1821** EGAN *Tom & Jerry* 346 The no-pinned hero..gave, as a toast, 'Success to \*Flat-catching'.

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**1813** *Sporting Mag.* XLII. 24 It would appear degrading and \*flat-like.

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